

Festivals, Arenas, and Stadia as environmental/political problems

Stadium events are fun to experience in person. You have your choice of entertainment, from all genres of music to any kind of sport imaginable. But what harm do these arenas impose on our surroundings?

Research was conducted in 2010 [1], as to the environmental impact associated with the Bonnaroo music festival in Tennessee. This case is specifically interesting because of the status of the festival as “one of only two US winners of the Greener Festival Award in 2008 and 2009.” However, Kennell and Sitz found that a bit was lacking in the commitment at Bonnaroo. For example, the personnel working at Bonnaroo, while mostly volunteers, are not aware of where the trash and recycled materials go after the event. This is a particular problem, as previous cases have arisen where it was discovered that recycling was later mixed with rubbish destined for landfills. Therefore, this could possibly mean that almost none of the recycled items get repurposed, and in fact find their way into landfills.

In another study conducted by Dennis Coates and Brad Humphreys [2] it was determined that while sports franchises seem to have a lot of political clout, they offer precious little monetarily speaking. As Coates and Humphreys state, sports franchises claim that their current stadium is insufficient for a variety of reasons, and then remind the municipality that other locations would support the building of a new stadium. However, the research went on to prove that in almost all cases “(except for Seattle where the Seahawks and Kingdome stadium arrived simultaneously),” the effects of building a new stadium were inconsequential to the local economy. In fact, “in no case [was] the affect of a baseball franchise distinguishable from zero.” While this is a common problem with sports franchises and music events, other, more international events suffer from similar politics.

The 2004 Olympics, held in Athens Greece, were a great burden to the country. Adjusted for inflation, the event cost Greece \$11 Billion, an amount of money that they are still paying for, and one that was arguably instrumental in Greece’s economic demise [3]. In this case, Vasilios Ziakas speculates [4] that a lack of coordination between the organizers of the Olympic Games and the tourism bodies for the purposes of designing for the post-Olympic use of facilities is to blame. After the Summer Olympics, Greece, and Athens in particular was left with great infra/superstructure improvements, which could have been (and arguably still can be) leveraged to Greece’s benefit. Politics also result in Olympic mishaps, as was the case with Yevgeny Vitishko, who was arrested during the week leading up to the start of the 2014 Olympics in Sochi Russia. Amnesty International suspects that Vitishko’s arrest was due to his role as an activist trying to expose environmental violations leading up the event.

The news is not all bad however, as there is much we can do to change the negative effects of these major entertainment events. For starters, stadiums can begin by implementing more recycling opportunities, and ones that are properly known, to avoid reintroduction of recycled materials into general garbage. Additionally, instead of paying for new facilities, perhaps city planners can work with sports team managers to design in scheduled maintenance updates into construction plans of any new stadiums. This would avoid any unnecessary building of new stadiums ,leading to loss of land, materials, and man-hours. Finally, perhaps the International Olympic Committee (IOC) can look at the possibility of

sponsoring host nations which look to repurpose old structures, or look to improve functional structures for accommodating the Olympic games.

References:

- [1] Kennell, James, and Rebekah Sitz. "Greening Bonnaroo: Exploring the Rhetoric and Reality of a Sustainable Festival through Micro-Ethnographic Methods." In *Proceedings of the Global Events Congress IV, 14-16 July 2010, Leeds, UK*. Leeds, UK: Events & Festivals Research, UK Centre for Events Management, 2010.
<http://www.eventsandfestivalsresearch.com/files/proceedings/KENNEL%20SITZ%20FINAL.pdf>.
- [2] Coates, Dennis, and Brad R. Humphreys. *The Growth Effects of Sport Franchises, Stadia and Arenas*. SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, September 16, 1997. <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=33240>.
- [3] Smith, Helena. "Athens 2004 Olympics: What Happened after the Athletes Went Home?" *The Guardian*, May 9, 2012, sec. Sport.
<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/may/09/athens-2004-olympics-athletes-home>.
- [4] Ziakas, Vassilis. "Post-Event Leverage and Olympic Legacy: A Strategic Framework for the Development of Sport and Cultural Tourism in Post-Olympic Athens." Accessed February 10, 2014. http://www.academia.edu/3569009/Post-Event_Leverage_and_Olympic_Legacy_A_Strategic_Framework_for_the_Development_of_Sport_and_Cultural_Tourism_in_Post-Olympic_Athens.